

Open letter to the media from Alexandre Bissonnette's parents

Alexandre has been sentenced to 40 years without possibility of parole, the heaviest sentence ever imposed in Quebec since the abolition of the death penalty ! We consider this to be a very severe sentence.

In 1976, after years of debate on the issue, the Honorable Pierre Elliott Trudeau narrowly succeeded in abolishing the death penalty in Canada. A country where human rights are of paramount importance and where hope for the future is allowed for all, even for the most despised people in society such as the convicted.

Before allowing consecutive sentences, those condemned of serious crimes could keep some hope in the possibility of applying for parole after 25 years and being placed under the supervision of the Parole Board of Canada for the rest of their lives. This glimmer of hope allowed them to continue on living and rehabilitate themselves. This system has proven itself because, according to the statistics, Canada has an extremely low recidivism rate.

We regret that, instead of adopting a more nuanced position, the Crown demanded the maximum consecutive sentence possible totalling 150 years. It seems to us that this position encourages a desire for revenge and extinguishes all hope by demanding a penalty far beyond a person's life expectancy, thus circumventing the abolition of the death penalty.

Unlike other countries, Canada has chosen an open door policy, welcoming people from all over the world and giving them hope for a second chance in life. Why deny convicts even the faintest hope ?

Alexandre suffered psychological and physical bullying during his school years which had devastating effects on his personality. If we really want to prevent such a tragedy from happening again, it seems to me that the solution is not to lock someone up for ever, but rather try to better understand and prevent bullying, which is a serious societal problem that continues to make victims amongst our young.

We wish to thank all those who opened their hearts and encouraged us with their words, messages and friendship, without ever passing judgment. We want to tell you that it is thanks to you if we can continue on.

